Fictional Realism
in Twentieth-Century China
Mao Dun,
Lao She,
Shen Congwen

David Der-wei Wang

Columbia University Press
New York
# Contents

Acknowledgments vii

1 Introduction: After Lu Xun 1

2 Fictive History: Mao Dun’s Historical Fiction 25
   The Historical, the Fictional, and the Real 27
   Emplotting History: Eclipse and Rainbow 35
   (Re)writing the Past and the Present 44
   “Multifaceted Relations”: The Rural, the Urban, and the Metropolitan 49

3 Plotted Revolutions: Mao Dun’s Politics of the Novel 67
   Zola or Tolstoy? 69
   The Politics of Gender 77
   The Politics of Betrayal 89
   Collapsing Spheres 101

4 Melancholy Laughter: Farce and Melodrama in Lao She’s Fiction 111
   Farce and Melodrama: Transgressions of the Real 113
   Comic Heroes as Alazons: The Two Mas and Divorce 123
   From Mimesis to Mimicry: The Biography of Niu Tianci and The City of Cats 135
   Camel Xiangzi: A Macabre Farce? 144
Contents

5 "I Love My Country, Does My Country Love Me?":
  Lao She's Patriotic Fiction 157
  Patriotism as a Problematic 159
  Cremation 168
  Unproblematic Problems: Patriotic Short Stories 174
  Patriotism "Domesticated": Four Generations Under One Roof 185

6 Critical Lyricism: The Boundary of the Real in the Fiction of Shen Congwen 201
  Critical Lyricism and Irony 203
  The Uncanny and the Grotesque 210
  Lyricizing Time, War, and History 224
  Eros, Thanatos, and Their Poetic Manifestations 234

7 Imaginary Nostalgia: Shen Congwen and Native Soil Fiction 247
  Toward a Poetics of Imaginary Nostalgia 249
  Random Sketches on A Trip to Hunan and West Hunan 253
  The Border Town and Long River 265
  The Art of Remembrance of Things Past 281

8 Conclusion 290
  Notes 317
  Glossary 343
  Bibliography 351
  Index 361